TIMES 16-1-50

Those Flying Saucers

Writer's Books Recalled Citing Cases of Prior Sky Voyages

To the Editor of The New York Times:

With flying saucers recently in the headlines again, after a news eclipse, it seems strange that not a peep should have been heard out of the Fortean Society. For the devotees of the late Charles Fort, that enemy of orthodox science, must have chortled up their sleeves during the outcropping of saucer stories in July, 1947.

Drawing upon data compiled and published by the master, Forteans could have pointed to hundreds of similar manifestations that appeared in the skies of the world during the past two centuries.

In his writings Fort railed at the dogmatism of scientists, whom he accused of refusing to accept as evidence any phenomena that did not jibe with their preconceived theories. He wrote not only about things that stayed up in the sky but also about things that fell down. His books teem with heavenly falls of ants, arrows, ashes and shredded asbestos, of red snow and of black rain. From such data he "proved" to his own satisfaction an elaborate theory of super-continents anchored above the earth, whose inhabitants dispatched weird vessels on terrestrial voyages of discovery, flashed incomprehensible signals at bewildered mortals, and pelted us with their refuse. The scientists in their turn dismissed Fort as an inconsequential spoofer.

Fort's instances were culled from a wide variety of sources, among them newspapers and scientific journals, the log-books of sea captains and the observations of astronomers. His deductions from the facts are often deliberately fanciful, but his sources were authentic.

For over 200 years reputable skygazers, quoted by Fort, have seen disks, globes or balloons of many colors, by night and by day, as well as luminous or dark objects in the shapes of torpedoes and cylinders.

Aerial appearances of torpedoes caused a newspaper stir during the first two weeks of April, 1897, comparable to the saucer sensation of July, 1947. It began when a "mysterious light" like a powerful searchlight was seen over Kansas City. The next day The New York Sun reported that "it was directed toward the earth, traveling east at a rate of sixty miles an hour." A week or so later The New York Herald carried a story about mysterious lights over Chicago, but something new had been added—they emanated from torpedo-shaped craft.

An astronomer identified the appearance as the star Alpha Orionis, and practical jokers in great numbers climbed on the bandwagon. Like the saucer sensation of 1947, the torpedo sensation of 1897 petered out in ridicule.

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to come into their own. Since his death, in 1932, some of his most "fantastic" conclusions have come to be regarded as at least plausible. The possibility of extraterrestrial visitations, no longer a dream for crackpots only, has become a proper subject for exhaustive investigation by the conservative military. Scientists of the utmost orthodoxy are considering the possibility of space platforms, and, while not on the scale of Fort's anchored super-continents, what is a space platform if not an anchored super-islet?

Whatever else Fort proved, or failed to prove, he presented conclusive evidence that humanity has been seeing people in the sky for a long, long time.

SONIA CONVERSE.

Villanova, Pa., Jan. 10, 1950.

Respect for the National Anthem

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r this troubled world.

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RIC C. EDLEY.
Jan. 1[illegible], 1950.

Authority Queried

NEW YORK TIMES:
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Port Authority,"
asked which Port
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bandon, is "None
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to what many

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21 JAN-50

nopoly" on atomic weapons we
a thorough review and revamp-
of our political strategy in atomic
ers. The kind of strategy we adopt
l-important. The correct end-ob-
ve for it was suggested by the
, who, on learning of the Presi-
s announcement as to Russia's
ving an atomic explosion, very
y said: "Now all nations must dis-
" But how, when they don't dare
unilaterally, because of mutual
ons and suspicions?
ey could, universally and simul-
usly, under the strongest possible
ntees against bad faith, if they
nake use of a time-tested tech-
that has been successful for
thirty years in bringing about
ive agreement among many com-
nations on labor matters—the
national Labor Office technique of
ocally conditional legislation—
lends itself admirably to adapta-
s a means of transforming the
nent race to Armageddon into a
ament race to an era of peace
rogress for this troubled world.
s how:
nation can suggest in the U. N.
bly that all nations be invited to
lelegates to a U. N. conference
d with evolving a code of law
all preparation for conducting
e and for the destruction of all
ns except police side-arms, hunt-
les, museum pieces and speci-
f historic value (which last shall
ilitarized) and the demobiliza-
all armed forces except police
st guards for maritime nations.
de could be made to contain
anction by way of inspection
orcement, through both national
ernational agencies, that may
necessary by any delegation to
ffective enforcement. It should
that it shall not become opera-
l universally adopted.
a conference would channel the
ns and fears that exist among
away from building up arms
ward building more effective
s for enforcement of universal
ment. It would take the ques-
disarmament out of the hands
. N. Military Staff Committee,
bviously is getting nowhere,
and place it instead in the
a group that really would
succeed in eliminating the can-
ppendage of war. Effective
could be carried on by U. N.
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ly excuse for having arms is
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s so, each that had not would
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ople. Ultimately they would
accede, because any Govern-
refused would in the end be
n by its own people, since all
e the instinct of self-preser-
l the desire to spend their
things they can use and en-

gram must succeed if civili-
o survive; it can succeed if
d in time, and it will succeed

There is more at stake here than the abandonment of facilities. What we need is a Port Authority which is responsible to the citizens of the two states, and is also able to be brought to court for its errors just as the rest of us are, and one that pays its proper share of local taxes, thereby receiving no subsidy and offering none.

F. T. RICHARDSON.
Madison, N. J., Jan. 14, 1950.

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